

~~Top Secret~~ 219

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Monday 6 February 1978 CG NIDC 78/030C

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CHINA-EGYPT: Support for Sadat

[ ] Peking has officially endorsed Egyptian President Sadat's Middle East peace initiative. The endorsement came in a statement by Premier Hua Kuo-feng broadcast on Saturday by the official Chinese news agency.

[ ] Hua said Sadat's cause is just and "conforms to the interests of the Egyptian, Palestinian, and other Arab peoples." The statement was made in conjunction with a meeting between

Hua and special Egyptian envoy Tuhami, who delivered a personal letter from Sadat. The Egyptian press reported last week that the letter would serve to bring the Chinese up to date on the latest Middle East developments.

[redacted] China's willingness to go on record in support of Sadat reflects its privately expressed apprehensions that the continued stalemate or a breakdown in the Egyptian-Israeli talks could seriously erode Sadat's support at home. Two years ago, similar Chinese concerns over the effect that the USSR's halt in military aid to Egypt might have had on Sadat's position--coupled with the desire to score propaganda points at Soviet expense--resulted in much-publicized but largely symbolic Chinese shipments of military aid to Cairo.

[redacted] Hua's endorsement of Sadat is likely to be a "one-shot" affair; Peking has diplomatic relations and political equities to protect with many of the hard-line Arab governments. In quoting Hua at a banquet for Tuhami, Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien omitted Hua's specific statement of support for Sadat's peace initiative while repeating the Premier's urgings for Arab unity. [redacted]

